

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

1. (Currently Amended) A cast-cutter for use in removing a cast from a patient, said cast-cutter comprising:

a body; [[and]]

a motor disposed in the body;

a cutting assembly mounted on the body and driven by the motor, the cutting assembly comprising first and second relatively moveable cutting members each defining a cutting edge and an inner face, the first and second cutting members adapted to permit cooperation between the respective cutting edges to cut cast material by a shearing action along a line of cut while maintaining the inner faces in non-engaging relationship to provide clearance therebetween, wherein the first and second cutting members are arranged to pivot relative to each other about a pivot axis which is offset from the line of cut[.]; and

wherein the cutting assembly further includes a guide portion to assist in controlling the splay of the cast material as it is being cut.

2. (Original) A cast-cutter according to claim 1, wherein the first and second cutting members of the cutting assembly are arranged such that during a cutting operation the cutting edges are aligned with a projected cutting plane.

3. (Previously Presented) A cast-cutter according to claim 1, wherein the inner face of at least one of the cutting members is inclined outwardly from a projected cutting plane in order to provide clearance between the inner faces when the cutting assembly is operated.

4. (Previously Presented) A cast-cutter as claimed in claim 1, wherein the inner face of each cutting member is outwardly inclined from the projected cutting plane in order to provide clearance between said faces when the cutting assembly is operated.

5. (Withdrawn) A cast-cutter as claimed in claim 1, wherein one of the first and second cutting members is fixed relative to the body, and the other cutting member is moveable.

6. (Withdrawn) A cast cutter as claimed in claim 1, wherein one of the cutting members is pivotally mounted relative to the other cutting member.

7. (Withdrawn) A cast-cutter as claimed in claim 1, wherein the cutting assembly further comprises a support member adapted to support the first and second cutting members.

8. (Withdrawn) A cast-cutter as claimed in claim 7, wherein the support member is adapted to fixedly support one of the first and second cutting members and to moveably support the other cutting member so that relative movement between the first and second cutting members may be achieved.

9. (Withdrawn) A cast-cutter as claimed in claim 7, wherein one of said cutting members is integrally formed with the support member.

10. (Withdrawn) A cast-cutter as claimed in claim 7, wherein one of said cutting members is separately formed and rigidly secured thereto.

11. (Withdrawn) A cast-cutter as claimed in claim 9, wherein the other of the first and second cutting members is moveably supported on the support member by being pivotally coupled thereto.

12. (Withdrawn) A cast-cutter as claimed in claim 11, wherein the pivotally mounted cutting member is coupled to the support member by means of a pivot pin arrangement.

13. (Withdrawn) A cast-cutter as claimed in claim 1, wherein the cutting assembly is adapted to be releasably mountable on the body of the cast-cutter.

14. (Withdrawn) A cast-cutter as claimed in claim 1, wherein the cutting assembly is adapted to be secured to the body in alternate directions such that the cast-cutter may be used to cut a cast in at least two directions.

15. (Withdrawn) A cast-cutter as claimed in claim 7, wherein the support member of the cutting assembly is adapted to be mountable on the body of the cast cutter in order to secure the cutting assembly thereto.

16. (Withdrawn) A cast-cutter as claimed in claim 1, wherein the cutting assembly further comprises biasing means for biasing at least the cutting edges of the first and second cutting members laterally together.

17. (Withdrawn) A cast-cutter as claimed in claim 16, wherein the biasing means comprises spring biasing means.

18. (Withdrawn) A cast-cutter as claimed in claim 16, wherein the biasing means comprises at least one of the first and second cutting members configured to have a longitudinal curvature or profile.

19. (Withdrawn) A cast-cutter as claimed in claim 1, wherein the respective cutting edges of the first and second members each comprise a separate insert secured to the first and second members respectively.

20. (Withdrawn) A cast-cutter as claimed in claim 1, wherein, in use, one of the first and second cutting members is adapted to be positioned underneath a cast, between the cast material and the skin of a patient.

21. (Withdrawn) A cast-cutter as claimed in claim 1, wherein the cutting assembly is adapted to be coupled to a drive means via a drive mechanism, wherein the drive mechanism

transmits motion from the drive means to the cutting assembly for causing relative movement between the cutting members to effect cutting.

22. (Withdrawn) A cast-cutter as claimed in claim 21, wherein the drive mechanism is adapted to reciprocate.

23. (Withdrawn) A cast-cutter as claimed in claim 22, wherein the drive mechanism comprises a reciprocating drive pin coupled to the drive means by a transmission arrangement, and also coupled to one of the cutting members.

24. (Withdrawn) A cast-cutter as claimed in claim 21, wherein the drive mechanism is adapted to rotate or oscillate.

25. (Withdrawn) A cast-cutter as claimed in claim 21, wherein the drive mechanism is adapted to terminate a connection between the drive means and the cutting assembly upon reaching a predefined force exerted by the cutting assembly.

26. (Withdrawn) A cast-cutter as claimed in claim 25, wherein the drive mechanism comprises a slip pin or shear pin coupling arrangement adapted to be activated or sheared when the predefined force is reached.

27. (Withdrawn) A cast-cutter as claimed in claim 1, wherein the cutting assembly is operated by electric drive means.

28. (Withdrawn) A cast-cutter as claimed in claim 27, wherein the electric drive means comprises an electric motor.

29. (Withdrawn) A cast-cutter as claimed in claim 28, further comprising control circuitry adapted to permit the required control of the electric motor to be achieved.

30. (Withdrawn) A cast-cutter as claimed in claim 29, wherein the control circuitry incorporate safety tripping circuits.

31. (Withdrawn) A cast-cutter as claimed in claim 28, wherein the electric motor further comprises braking means adapted to prevent movement of the cutting means when the cast-cutter is deactivated.

32. (Withdrawn) A cast-cutter as claimed in claim 31, wherein the braking means permits the electric motor to be short-circuited to generate a transitory back e.m.f. to rapidly stop rotation of the motor.

33. (Withdrawn) A cast-cutter as claimed in claim 32, further comprising at least one electrical resistor through which the electric motor may be short-circuited.

34. (Withdrawn) A cast-cutter as claimed in claim 1, further comprising visual signal means which are activated when power is supplied thereto.

35. (Withdrawn) A cast-cutter as claimed in claim 1, wherein the cast-cutter is activated by activating a main switch, and deactivated by releasing said main switch.

36. (Withdrawn) A cast-cutter as claimed in claim 35, further comprising at least one safety switch which must be activated before the cast-cutter can be operated by the main switch.

37. (Withdrawn) A cast-cutter as claimed in claim 36 further comprising two safety switches, wherein at least one of the two safety switches must be activated before the cast-cutter may be operated by the main switch.

38. (Withdrawn) A cast-cutter as claimed in claim 37, wherein one of the two safety switches is positioned on the cast-cutter to permit ease of use by a right-handed operator, and the other of the two safety switches is positioned to permit ease of use by a left-handed operator.

39. (Withdrawn) A cast-cutter as claimed in claim 1, further comprising a safety guard disposed around the cutting assembly.

40. (Currently Amended) A method of removing a cast from a patient, said method comprising the steps of:

providing a cast cutter including:

a body[[:]],

a motor disposed in the body, and

a cutting assembly mounted on the body and driven by the motor. the cutting assembly [[and]] comprising first and second relatively moveable cutting members each defining a cutting edge and an inner face, the first and second cutting members adapted to permit cooperation between the respective cutting edges to cut by a shearing action along a line of cut while maintaining the inner faces in non-engaging relationship to provide clearance therebetween, wherein the first and second cutting members are arranged to pivot relative to each other about a pivot axis which is offset from the line of cut[[:]], and

a guide portion forming part of the cutting assembly;

manipulating the cast-cutter to position a cast material to be removed from a patient between the first and second cutting members; and

activating the cast-cutter to cause relative movement of the first and second cutting members to cause the cast material to be cut by cooperation of the cutting edges, with the guide portion being operative to assist in controlling the splay of the cast material as it is being cut.

41. (Withdrawn) A switching arrangement for use with a hand operated device having a central plane, said arrangement comprising:

a primary operating switch mounted substantially on said plane;

a first secondary operating switch mounted to be offset from said plane in a first direction;

and

a second secondary operating switch mounted to be offset from said plane in an opposite second direction;

wherein the primary operating switch may be activated to operate the hand operated device when at least one of the first and second operating switches is activated.

42. (Previously Presented) A cast-cutter according to claim 1, wherein the pivot axis is located substantially above the line of cut.

43. (Previously Presented) A cast-cutter according to claim 1, wherein the pivot axis is located substantially below the line of cut.

44. (Previously Presented) A cast-cutter according to claim 1, wherein the location of the pivot axis permits the transport of material under the pivot axis, without the pivot axis passing through the material.

45. (Previously Presented) A cast-cutter according to claim 1, further comprising a support member wherein the first cutting member is rigidly mounted on the support member and the second cutting member is pivotally mounted on the support member.